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Secret Trash is Part of Otepka Case

Arguments Over
'Higher Loyalties'
Also Involved

WASHINGTON (UPI) —

Secret trash, purloined typewriter ribbons, arguments over "higher" loyalties — these were the elements of a State Department personnel case now entering a new chapter.

The case of Otto F. Otepka, a State Department security officer, has popped in and out of news for the past year.

Otepka, 49, was until about a year ago chief of the evaluations division of the State Department's Office of Security. The office handles security clearances of employees.

Dismissal Notice

On Sept. 23, 1963, the State Department served him with a notice of intended dismissal on 13 charges.

Three charges accused Otepka of conduct "unbecoming an officer of the Department of State" on grounds he gave classified documents concerning the loyalty of employees or prospective employees to J. G. Sourwine, chief counsel of the Senate internal security subcommittee.

The subcommittee had been investigating State Department security off and on since 1961. Otepka had been a witness at hearings several times during this period.

The burden of the charges was that Otepka furnished information to the subcommittee against the wishes of superiors in the State Department.

Cites 1948 Directive

The department cited a March 13, 1948, directive of President Harry S. Truman which ordered the files of the government's employee loyalty programs to be kept confidential and immune from subpoena except at the discretion of the office of the President.

The Truman order, still in effect, was designed for protection of individuals.

Eight of the charges accused Otepka of improperly "declassifying" and "mutilating" State Department records by snipping off the classified labels.

'Breach of Conduct'

The dismissal letter said the two latter charges were "a breach of the standard of conduct expected of an officer."

The letter said the State Department's evidence against Otepka was gathered by obtaining and examining ribbons from his typewriter and scraps of paper from his "burnbag." This is a brown paper sack found in all State Department offices for collection and incineration of waste paper which otherwise might disclose secrets.

Otepka filed an answer

denying the charges.

He said that in his committee appearances his purpose was to "speak the whole truth" and to put "loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to persons, party, or government department."

Levels Own Charges

He then leveled charges of his own at colleagues in the State Department.

"I have reason to believe," Otepka wrote, "that in recent months employees of the Department of State have secretly employed listening devices to eavesdrop on conversations in my office."

"I have reason to believe that my office telephone has been tapped and that my desk and my safe have been surreptitiously opened and searched."

Two state department officials who first denied any wiretapping, were placed on "administrative leave" by the State Department after they amended their senate testimony and said a telephone tapping attempt was made. They later resigned.

Otepka filed an appeal from his dismissal notice. A closed hearing is scheduled to begin this Wednesday before a hearing officer.

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